

NORTHSHORE EDUCATION CONSORTIUM'S

SOAR/EMBARK TRANSITION PROGRAM

PARENT & STUDENT HANDBOOK

2026-2027



121 Loring Avenue
Salem, MA 01970
978-740-5913

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INTRODUCTION

The SOAR/EMBARK Transition Program, located on the campus of Salem State University, is committed to supporting neurodiverse young adults in building meaningful, independent lives after high school. Designed for students ages 18–22, SOAR/EMBARK supports young adults with executive functioning challenges, learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and related needs as they take the next steps toward adulthood. Our students often have a range of neurodevelopmental differences, including anxiety, ASD, ADHD, and dyslexia.

We understand that many students in this age group have incredible strengths—whether creative, intellectual, or personal—but may still need support with social interactions, decision-making, and everyday responsibilities. That’s why SOAR/EMBARK focuses not just on academics and job training, but also on building confidence, communication skills, and a sense of personal responsibility in all areas of life.

Our Salem State University setting provides a myriad of opportunities to grow in a supportive, inclusive environment, whether it’s learning to take the bus independently, managing a budget, practicing interview skills, or forming lifelong friendships.

Program experiences may include:

- Navigating public transportation and community spaces
- Building organizational, executive functioning and time management skills
- Practicing money management and budgeting
- Exploring jobs through paid internships
- Strengthening study habits and learning strategies
- Developing meaningful social connections and self-advocacy

At SOAR/EMBARK, we meet students where they are—and help them move forward. We are here to support that journey with compassion, structure, and a deep belief in every student’s potential.

ELIGIBILITY & REFERRALS

To be considered for admission:

- Be between the ages of 18 and 22 with a documented disability
- Demonstrate the motivation and behavioral readiness to explore work and/or academic opportunities in a variety of settings
- Complete at least one tour and one visit to the SOAR/EMBARK Program
- Participate in a personal interview with Program staff

All referral information should be sent to:

Ellen Heald
Program Director/Principal
Enterprise Center
121 Loring Avenue, Suite 270
Salem MA 01970
EHeald@NSEDU.org

PICK-UP AND DROP-OFF PROCEDURES

Pick up and drop off takes place in lot E, via the loading dock. Student drivers need permission from the program director and will need to complete the necessary forms to receive a (mandatory) parking pass.

SCHOOL CANCELLATION

SOAR/EMBARK typically follows Salem State University's decisions. If, however, SOAR/REMBARK decides to close school (even if SSU remains open) you will be notified.

If SOAR/EMBARK is open, but the students' school district decides to close, the district typically will not transport the student during the closure period. Students/their team may choose to arrange alternative transport should they wish to.

Communication regarding school closures will take place via:

- automated email, text and voicemail alerts.
- an alert will be posted on our website home page (NSEDU.org)
- posting on WBZ

TRANSPORTATION

A significant goal of The Program is to teach students how to use public transportation. Program students will each be educated on how to use public transportation to get to and from The Program (if public transportation is available in their community), the worksite, and to travel within the North Shore.

STAFF DIRECTORY

Name	Role	Phone	E Mail
Ellen Heald	Director	978-476-2866	eheald@nsedu.org
Melissa Nobles	Transition Coordinator	978-210-8886	mnobles@nsedu.org
Michelle Liming	Admin Assistant	978-740-5913	mliming@nsedu.org
Lucy Noyes	Social Worker	978-740-5913	lnoyes@nsedu.org
Daniel Petronzio	Social Worker	857-293-9577	dpetronzio@nsedu.org
Kerry Candido	Embark Teacher	978-740-5913	kcandido@nsedu.org
Dan Fraser	Embark Teacher	978-740-5913	dfraser@nsedu.org
Michael Giannetti	Soar Teacher	781-740-5913	mgianetti@nsedu.org
Chris Mastone	Soar Teacher	978-852-7593	cmastone@nsedu.org
April Pierson	Speech & Language	978-740-5913	apierson@nsedu.org

CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

SOAR/EMBARK follows an Integrated Learning Approach. SOAR/EMBARK classes are designed to build a strong foundation of knowledge that students may apply across different areas of life. Lessons are connected, so that skills learned in one class support learning in others. Instruction is focused on helping students apply what they've learned in school, at work, and in the community.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

All students participate in community activities that are designed to promote independence, the application of knowledge, and appropriate social interactions. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a socially mature manner in all settings.

INTERNSHIPS & COMMUNITY-BASED TRIPS

At SOAR/EMBARK, we take the time to understand each student's interests, goals, and current skill levels. This allows us to tailor their experiences and ensure they are exposed to a wide range of workplace environments and potential career paths. We partner with local, state and nationwide employers to offer paid, supervised internships in order for our students to gain real-life vocational experience. Ongoing monitoring and support help students build confidence as they explore options that align with their strengths and future aspirations. Additionally, students regularly participate in community-based field trips. In all community-based opportunities, students will travel by public transportation, walking, school vans, The Ride or staff cars. Students should dress appropriately for the weather and maintain expected behavior in all settings.

COORDINATING COMMUNITY TRANSITION PLANNING

SOAR/EMBARK staff actively collaborates with adult service agencies—including the Department of Mental Health (DMH), Department of Developmental Services (DDS), MassHire (formerly Massachusetts Rehabilitation, or "MRC"), the Social Security Administration, and other local partners—to support each student's transition toward greater independence. When an individual's transition plan has not yet been established, staff will coordinate a meeting with the student's team and the appropriate adult service provider to initiate the planning process.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Program students are expected to behave in a socially mature manner. In the event the student does not behave in a socially acceptable manner, the following will take place:

- First offense: SOAR/EMBARK staff will meet with the student to discuss the issue and develop an action plan to support more appropriate behavior.
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- Second offense: SOAR/EMBARK staff will notify parents/team members of the infraction. Parents/Guardians will be informed of the first offense. An action plan will be developed to support the student.
- Third offense: The student's support team, including SOAR/EMBARK staff, will convene to discuss concerns and potential change of options/placement.

ATTENDANCE

Consistent attendance is mandatory for a student's successful integration and success at SOAR/EMBARK. If attendance is a concern, students and other team members will be required to meet with program staff to develop a remedial attendance improvement plan. Students must bring a doctor's note for any illness treated under the physician's care. In the event of a sudden illness/ or an emergency, the student is expected to contact Program staff as soon as possible. Appointments (medical, dental, therapies, etc.) should be scheduled outside of school hours whenever possible. To report an absence, call 978-740-5913, option 1.

Students are expected to arrive at The Program on time and be prepared for class or work. If a student has excessive tardiness/absences, a corrective plan will be developed with the assistance of the program staff, the student, and their team.

DRESS CODE

Students are expected to practice good conduct, use respectful manners, and dress appropriately for both work and school. Students are expected to maintain their personal hygiene (regular bathing, brushing teeth, use of personal hygiene products, etc.) Students are required to wear clean, school and worksite-appropriate clothing.

NURSING SERVICES

A nurse is not on site daily at the Soar/Embark Program. Nursing services are provided through scheduled site visits and include telephone support, email consultation, and staff training related to students' emergency care plans. The nurse conducts staff training twice annually, with additional training provided as needed. Medication management is determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the school nurse.

SMOKING/VAPING/DRUGS/ALCOHOL

Smoking and/or vaping is prohibited in SOAR/EMBARK, on the Salem State University campus and at all worksites. The use, possession, distribution, and sale of cigarettes, vaping or drug paraphernalia and/or alcoholic beverages are prohibited in SOAR/EMBARK, on the Salem State University campus and at all worksites. The following consequences will result from any infractions of this policy:

- If at school or work, the police will be notified & take possession of the substance.
- Within 48 hours, a meeting will be held with the student, his/her parents or guardian, school district personnel, and The Program staff to determine appropriate next steps as determined by The Program Director (and/or their designee) up to and including suspension or expulsion from the SOAR/EMBARK Program.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES IN BRIEF

ATTENDANCE/CLOTHING:

- maintain good attendance
- arrive on time
- maintain proper hygiene
- wear school AND worksite appropriate clothing

CLASSROOM/WORKSITE:

- No unrelated electronics usage during class or internships. Using electronic devices of any kind (cell phone, tablets, headphones, etc.) will only be allowed during break time or lunch. Use of electronics during other times may only be used with the permission of SOAR/EMBARK staff
- Have writing utensils and any other supplies necessary for class
- Passing in any assignments on the day they are due
- Increase knowledge and usage of technology for keeping appointments, travel routes, homework, calendars, etc.

BEHAVIORAL/SOCIAL:

- Come to the program with a positive attitude each day
- Treat your classmates, staff and members of the community with respect and dignity
- Respect the physical boundaries of others (no hugs, etc., without asking the other person's permission first)
- Appropriate language in all settings

SIGNATURE PAGE

I have received, read and understand all the information provided to me in the Northshore Education Consortium SOAR/Embark Program Handbook and the NEC Handbook for the 2026-2027 school year.

Student Name (PRINT)

Date

Student Signature

Date

Parent Signature

Date